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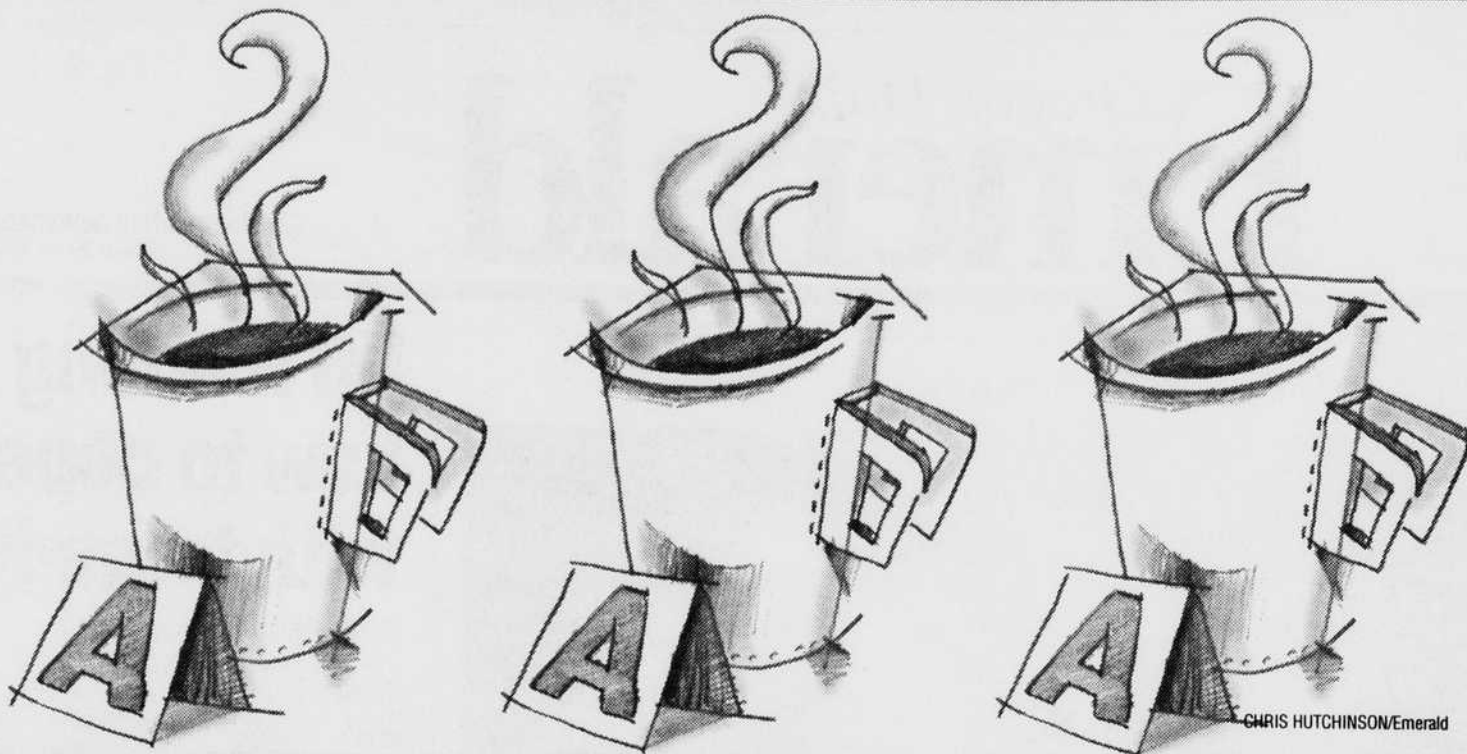
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Coffee choice should reflect student's interests

AN EMERALD EDITORIAL

The criteria chosen by EMU Food Services are too narrow and don't reflect taste and community concerns

Until the EMU starts deliberating which microbrewery it will contract with, coffee is king in the student union.

In the old days, kings were chosen by the will of God and the law of succession (or brutish wars with big swords). The method by which the EMU is choosing a coffee vendor is decidedly less rational.

But there is one similarity between the two processes — the will of the people is pretty much irrelevant. EMU officials decided as much when they opted to include only two students on the six-member coffee selection panel and to reject plans for a student taste test.

This doesn't make any sense. Students are the ones who will be stuck drinking whatever brown swill the EMU committee selects. If we make the wrong choice, we have only ourselves to blame, but if administrators make the wrong choice, it's another indication that the needs of students are not a factor in the way this University is run.

The controversy started when the EMU made its initial coffee selection. Seattle Coffee Co. won the bidding battle despite having neither the best tasting coffee nor the best price. They did, however, wow the selection committee with the best presentation.

That's right — your coffee drinking habits

were determined by full-color overheads and professionally trained marketing personnel. Too bad for all those local companies that provide better coffee and a boost to the Eugene community — they forgot to send someone to Harvard to get an MBA.

Justifiably, this left a few people steamed. There were a number of problems with the selection process, both in the criteria used and the less-than-objective way the companies were evaluated.

So, the University's Office of Business Affairs tossed out the whole selection process and ordered the EMU selection committee to have another go at it.

This also upset a few companies who felt there was nothing wrong with the existing criteria, just the outcome of the process. Given the mess EMU Food Services made out of the whole process, however, we think redoing the selection process makes sense.

Unfortunately, the way the folks at food services have proposed redoing it doesn't make a lot of sense. As we mentioned before, the new selection process doesn't include a taste test and involves a minimal amount of student involvement.

Instead of fixing the flaws with the initial selection criteria, the EMU has increased the likelihood that the selection committee will make a bad coffee choice. Worse, by delaying the final decision, the committee has ensured minimal student protest by making its announcement in the summer.

The EMU Food Services people are right to worry about the objectivity and reliability of a taste test, but that doesn't mean taste shouldn't be a fac-

tor. Apparently, even the selection committee doesn't intend to sample the product of the companies they interview.

While taste has taken on a smaller role in the selection process, that ever-vital interview has become even more important as all applicants will be invited to make formal presentations. As before, the professional "polish" of a coffee vendor doesn't seem closely tied to their ability to provide a good product.

In their rush to reward companies who are skilled at the business side of things, the committee members are ignoring what ought to be more significant factors. Not only has taste received little emphasis in the latest criteria, but labor and environmental records are practically ignored. So, too, is the company's location — the University should support local industry when possible.

This isn't to say that cost and professionalism shouldn't be considered, but taste should be more important and a company's social conscience should be weighed as well.

The University as a whole and EMU Food Services in particular seem too keen on rewarding companies that follow the typical business pattern when they should be interested in helping companies reject that pattern by helping the community and the planet and providing a high quality product.

Let's not name another king who is already used to sitting on a throne.

This editorial represents the opinion of the Emerald editorial board. Responses may be sent to ode@oregon.uoregon.edu.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Court within power

There are just some days when I feel like thanking God for being an atheist. First, Barry Williams. And then, Spencer Hamlin's brief protest of a Constitution Court decision and Mike Running's call for impeachment. I'm not sure that Hamlin or Running read the decisions. Having lost my faith a long time ago, I just assume they haven't.

If they had read the decisions, they would realize that Ben Unger, ASUO vice president, was censured because he broke rules. Unger tried to make the case that unless he was acting "simultaneously" for the elections board and the Wortman/Cowling campaign, he was not violating rules governing conflict of interest. The court made specific provisions in this case, stating that assisting the elections board with tasks such as putting up a poll booth was not a conflict of interest, but picking up the fliers of an opposing campaign or working in a poll booth (in this

case, asking me to vote) did pose a conflict of interest.

To me, that ruling seems like a logical conclusion based on the facts. As far as the court overstepping its bounds in censuring Unger, a quick reading of the ASUO Constitution leaves us with, "10.2: The Constitution Court shall have supreme and final authority on all questions of interpretation of this Constitution and any rules promulgated under it, including elections rules and complaints." If Running thinks that the Constitution gives too broad of powers to the Constitution Court, perhaps he should sponsor a ballot measure to change the Constitution.

Finally, the court cannot make rulings on events that were not reported as grievances. It is not the police, and unless witnesses come forward, the court's hands are tied. In the case that alleged that poll workers told people to vote no on OSPiRG, neither grievant would or could identify the poll workers re-

sponsible. The elections board did everything in its power to correct the problem, but they could not control every word that came out of every poll worker's mouth.

Selena Brewington

Grievant in Brewington et al. vs. Unger et al.

Christian confusion

Whew! Barry Williams certainly trotted out a wealth of statistical data (ODE, May 20) and from such scholarly and/or unbiased publications as Parade magazine and Christian American, too, all apparently in an effort to refute my claim that Christianity in the United States is in decline. Yet rather than a declaration of "victory over biblical morality," my letter to which he refers (ODE, May 11) was actually meant to be more of a comment on the ethical myopia of many who call themselves "Christian," particularly regarding the stubborn tenacity with which they cling to their interpretation of the mythos in the face of any and all conflicting evidence and with little or no regard for the sincere sentiments of others.

In fact, it was Gordon Melby (ODE, May 4), and not I, who bemoaned what he [Melby] seems to believe to be the erosion of Christian (read: the only true) morality — as indeed has Williams himself over the years in multitudinous encyclicals to we heathen, all dutifully printed by the ODE, The Register-Guard and others.

So ... schizoid doublethink or cynical sophistry? Whatever the case, these devout gentlemen simply can't have it both ways.

As for "[the] minnow with little feet is about to be devoured by the giant Christian fish," what a disturbingly violent yet ironic image to be made by someone professing to revere "the Prince of Peace."

Incidentally, although I don't have the exact counts myself, I can't help but notice that Williams failed to mention the millions upon millions of Americans who also believe in UFOs, Elvis sightings and Ollie North's integrity.

Bill Smees
University Staff

Thumbs



TO PRESIDENT CLINTON:

In a change of policy, Clinton agreed to sign on to the global treaty to eliminate land mines. While this is admirable, the restrictions Clinton put on U.S. adherence to the ban were numerous and troublesome — the use of mines will be gradually ended over at least eight years, and the Army is still working to develop an alternative anti-personnel device.



TO THE FAILURE OF MEASURE 53:

Once again, Oregon voters have indicated that community is unimportant to them. In an act of ignorance and selfishness, Oregonians rejected a proposal that would have repealed provisions requiring a majority turnout at elections to pass funding measures. If we stop paving roads, buying books, repairing streetlights and educating children, will people finally accept that government has a vital role to play?

TO THE U.S. SUPREME COURT:

The Court decided 6-3 that public television stations are not obligated to include third-party candidates deemed "not newsworthy" in station-sponsored debates. In other words, your tax dollars are now being used to help shape the outcome of elections and maintain the two-party system, all without any choice on your part. Sounds like a peculiar sort of democracy.